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SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: GOI INVOLVEMENT IN SAMARRA
ANGERS SUNNIS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1705
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Classified By: PRT Salah Ad Din Leader David Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) .

(U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din (SAD) reporting cable.

I1. (C) SUMMARY: Since the terrorist bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine (Golden Mosque) in 2006 pushed the country to the edge of Sunni-Shi'a civil war, the Government of Iraq (GOI) has taken a direct role in Samarra's security. Since the bombing, the city has made remarkable progress in establishing security and strengthening its civil society and basic governance. With this progress has come a desire among local (Sunni) Samarrans for greater control over local affairs. Sunnis in Samarra also think that the largely Shi'a GOI's involvement in the city is a Shiite power-grab, using security restrictions as leverage to bring the local economy under Shi'a control. The SAD Provincial Council (PC) views the GOI's involvement as a serious encroachment on its authority and an attempt by Iraqi Shiites and Iran to take Samarra away from the Province. END SUMMARY.

GOI SECURITY FORCES OPERATING IN SAMARRA

I2. (SBU) Following the terrorist bombing of the Golden Mosque in 2006, the Prime Minister's Office moved a National Police (NP) force to Samarra and established the Samarra Operations Command (SOC) to secure the Mosque and the historic area around it during the restoration process, and secure the city against terrorist attacks. The SOC commander, Major General (MG) Rasheed, has partnered with CF for the past several years to take responsibility for security in the city, an effort that has also been supported by Sons of Iraq (SOI) units.

SUNNI SAMARRANS WANT TO MANAGE THEIR OWN SECURITY

I3. (C) Local officials insist that the city now enjoys good security and it is time for the NP to move out. There is deep concern among Sunni Arab Samarrans that the SOC is now essentially a GOI effort to control Sunnis in that city and to further Shi'a aims. At the same time, significant progress is being made in standing up the Samarra Joint Coordination Center (JCC), which will be critical going forward in coordinating all security forces (national and local) in Samarra. The JCC cannot succeed without clear, visible support from MG Rasheed, which has not been forthcoming. The close personal relationship between MG Rasheed and the SAD Provincial Chief of Police, who inappropriately ignores city officials and deals directly with the General on city matters, further empowers the SOC.

PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS WANT COALITION FORCES TO STAY

I4. (C) Provincial officials share Sunni Arab Samarrans' view

that NP must depart Samarra, but they are not as confident that local Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are ready to maintain security. In a May 24 meeting with the PRT Team Leader and Coalition Forces (CF), the PC Chairman, Ahmed Abdullah, (AKA Abu Mazin, whose immediate past position was Governor's Assistant for Security Affairs) requested that CF not withdraw from Samarra, as they are still needed to maintain security. He said that both the Samarra City Council and the PC would rather have CF stay in the city until the SOC is closed and NP leave the city.

¶15. (C) While being careful to affirm respect for Iraq's law and Constitution, Abu Mazin voiced strong resentment towards the continued NP presence. "It's not right that the shrine gets more security and attention from the Central Government than the citizens do. Samarrans don't want national security forces from Baghdad stationed there any longer...They want to take Samarra from us. We are knocking on all the peaceful doors first" in order to get the outside security forces out of Samarra, "but if that doesn't work we may take other actions... Samarra is not a district of Baghdad or Iran, and I won't take orders from them either." Despite his clear frustration, Abu Mazin was hopeful that a constructive solution could be found.

GOI FAILS TO INTEGRATE SAMARRA SOI FORCE

¶16. (SBU) Local resentment of what Sunni Samarrans see as the NP's role as an "occupying force" is complicated by a large number of local out-of-work SOI members. Over the past two years seven SOI units comprising 2,400 defenders have been

* Missing Section 002 *
